Remarks
Ambassador Michelle D. Gavin
Marine Corps Ball
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As Prepared for Delivery

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- Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for joining me tonight to celebrate the birthday of one of America's finest institutions – the United States Marine Corps.

- First I would like to acknowledge

    - All Marines who have joined us this evening.
    - I'd particularly like to recognize our oldest Marine present, Dr. Jay Salkin.

- This is a unique occasion – but it is much more than an opportunity to break out an ill-fitting tuxedo or the gown for a fun evening with old and new friends – though I have to say that part is pretty enjoyable.

- No, tonight we do much more than enjoy ourselves in evening wear. Tonight, we celebrate something very special, something uniquely American, and something deeply honorable – the United States Marine Corps.

- This is a night of celebration, but also of observing traditions and rituals – not simply for their own sake, but because they reinforce the idea of continuity, and act as a reminder of the legacy of the United States Marine Corps – a legacy carried forward by the young men and women in our own Marine community today.

- Honor is perhaps the most important part of that legacy. It means something to all of us – it is what we all strive for. To a Marine however, honor is sewn into the fabric of his or her very being.

- For it is honor – and courage – and commitment that makes a Marine what he or she is.

- Marines are a breed apart. Their motto is well known: Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful.

- It is their motto, but it is much more than that – it is a way of life. Marines – always faithful – to the mission, to each other, to the corps, and to the country.

- When Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz was describing Marines as they took Iwo Jima in 1945, he said something that in my mind applies with equal precision today. He said among those men fighting for that rocky island, "Uncommon valor was common virtue." In a Marine today, that is still true.

- Created 237 years ago, even before the United States ratified its Constitution, the Marines have demonstrated their uncommon valor time and again.

- They have been the first to fight and to defend America, and, frequently, they have paid the ultimate price – willingly, boldly, and with honor, courage, and commitment.

- Tonight, we have the opportunity to pause, and to say thank you to the men and women of United States Marine Corps.

- Let me just say a word or two about what this means to me as a diplomat serving overseas – to all of us in this room that serve in the U.S. Mission.

- These young men and women stand guard over us – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Their presence among us is something we should never, ever take for granted.

- Our typical interaction with them may be mundane – whether it is unlocking doors, getting visitors into the building, or hosting a happy hour every now and then.

- But we must all understand that there is much more to it. If the events in Libya and Egypt and Yemen and other spots around the world over the past few weeks are not enough – let me assure you even though we are very fortunate to work in a country where we don't worry as much about angry mobs – these men and women serve to protect and to fight, if they must, for the country we work to serve and represent.

- They are trained and ready to protect each of us and our Mission. Do not doubt that – and do not discount the honor, the courage, and the commitment that they hold in store to accomplish that task.

- To the Americans serving in the U.S. Mission, I encourage you to consider regularly how incredibly lucky we are to have these Marines standing with us.

- But there is another side to the steely calm and firm focus on security that they bring to our Mission.

- They are an integral part of our community, even helping us to become a closer community with the many social events they host or support. The fact is, not only do they startle us from time to time with alarm drills, but they also help to make us a happier bunch.

- While members of the detachment come and go, I have seen over the past year a substantially deeper engagement in our community – and it is doing something good for us.

- I'll not soon forget the Kids' Boot Camp – watching my sweet young Clara along with lots of other young ones, trying to figure out exactly how does one do a push-up – and loving every minute of it.

- I would like to commend Gunnery Sergeant Jerry RobletoRivas for his leadership and for building a team, fit, ready and uniquely qualified to protect us, but also willing to walk the extra mile to be a positive force in our social lives.

- So, please join me thanking the Gunny and his team for what they do day after day – protecting us and leading us as a community. <<Applause>>

- On 20 March 1779 in Boston, Marine Capt. William Jones, advertised for quote unquote – a few good men – to enlist in the Corps for naval duty. The term stuck -- mainly because of the implication that those good enough would be few indeed, and that a few such extraordinary individuals would indeed be enough.

- Marines are a small and potent force, and I am proud to serve with them.

- I would like to close with a quote I came across – this one from an anonymous Canadian. He said, “Marines are about the most peculiar breed of human beings I have ever witnessed. They treat their service as if it was some kind of cult, plastering their emblem on almost everything they own, worshipping their Commandant almost as if he was a god, and making weird animal noises like a band of savages. They'll fight like rabid dogs at the drop of a hat just for the sake of a little action, and are the cockiest SOB's I have ever known. Most have the foulest mouths and drink well beyond man's normal limits, but their high spirits and sense of brotherhood set them apart and , generally speaking, of the United States Marines I've come in contact with, are the most professional soldiers and the finest men I have had the pleasure to meet."

- Happy Birthday Marines!! Semper Fi!!